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Letter dated 17 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I refer to the report on the Independent Inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (S/1999/1257 of 16 December 1999).

The report contains references to the Bangladesh Battalion (RUTBAT) serving in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). After due investigation it has been found that some of the remarks made about the Bangladesh contingent in the report lack clarity, objectivity and factual accuracy. Some of the remarks are seriously misleading as they are made out of context and without relevant information and necessary clarification.

The facts and comments with regard to the remarks made in the report about the Bangladesh battalion are provided in the annex to the present letter.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter, its annex and enclosures circulated as a document of the Security Council. I have addressed an identical letter to the Secretary-General.

(*Signed*) Anwarul Karim **Chowdhury**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 17 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Comments on the remarks made about the Bangladesh battalion (RUTBAT) serving in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in the report on the Independent Inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (S/1999/1257 of 16 December 1999)

A. The tragic killing of the Belgian peacekeepers and the question of Bangladesh battalion (RUTBAT) intervention (para. 2, p. 17)

There is a reference to Lt. Col. Dewez asking his Sector Commander to have the intervention of the Rwandan Army and RUTBAT. There is no further statement as to what happened afterwards in this regard except the mention that "meanwhile the peacekeepers were badly beaten in Camp Kigali". It is mentioned for the record that the Bangladesh battalion was not contacted by Lt. Col. Dewez or any other officer; nor was there any information from or tasking by the Force Headquarters to Bangladesh battalion for intervention in support of the Belgian peacekeepers. It may be noted that there was no RUTBAT camp or troop deployment around Camp Kigali. As such, scope of spontaneous intervention by Bangladesh battalion did not exist at all.

B. Abduction of Judge Kavaruganda (para. 2, p. 18)

The report states that Judge Kavaruganda made various telephone calls to the Belgian, Bangladeshi and Ghanaian contingents asking for help. RUTBAT did not receive any call for intervention from Judge Kavaruganda. No communication was received from Force Headquarters or Sector Headquarters for his evacuation.

C. Failure to respond to the genocide: evacuation operations (para. 1, p. 36)

The statement "and within days, the Bangladeshi contingent was no longer responding to orders from UNAMIR Headquarters" is far from the truth. The Bangladesh contingent rendered all-out assistance and cooperation for evacuation operations. In fact, responsibility for evacuation of expatriates, especially the Africans and the Asians, remained with the Bangladesh Infantry Group. The responsibilities of RUTBAT also included protection of Force Headquarters and escorting the Force Commander's visit to different places and all other escort duties. RUTBAT was the only single contingent of UNAMIR that continued to carry out all tasks assigned by Force or Sector Headquarters until its withdrawal. The dedication to the assigned tasks shown by RUTBAT was highly appreciated by sector Commander Colonel BEM Marchall L. *Copy of his letter dated 13 April 1994 and his handwritten letter of 11 December 1995 addressed to RUTBAT Commander are enclosed* (see enclosures I and II).

D. Alleged decision to withdraw (para. 3, p. 36)

Bangladesh did not make any indication to withdraw its battalion as stated in the report. The letter dated 21 April 1994 (S/1994/481) from the Permanent

Representative of Bangladesh essentially raised points of security concerns. It was recalled that the Bangladesh contingent had been sent to Rwanda for peacekeeping; they were not equipped for combat operations or even to protect themselves in case of armed attack. The security of the contingent was sought through political means, failing which the Secretary-General was requested to provide them with necessary equipment and reinforcement, at least to protect themselves. If nothing was possible, it was proposed that RUTBAT be relocated to a nearby country as a contingency arrangement so that it could return to Rwanda as soon as a new peace accord is signed. The legitimate concerns over security of the peacekeepers should not be interpreted as indication of withdrawal of Bangladesh contingent from the United Nations Mission.

E. Allowing the Belgian peacekeepers into the Amahoro stadium (para. 4, p. 36)

The report refers to the "embarrassing instance where Bangladeshi peacekeeping troops refused to allow colleagues from the Belgian contingent inside the Amahoro stadium complex where they were seeking refuge". The fact about the incident as recorded in the RUTBAT contingent duty officer's log book is summarized as follows:

On 7 April 1994, at about 1410 hours, a group of 25 Belgians (16 or 17 soldiers and 8 or 9 civilians), with a convoy of seven vehicles tried to reach their battalion's new location in Kigali Airport but failed. They then wanted to enter Amahoro stadium for safety; but were stopped by local people, Gendarmerie, RGF and armed militia about 200 metres away from the Stadium gate. As the convoy came forward about 100 metres or so, a hostile mob tried to impede movement of the convoy puncturing vehicle tires by firing gun shots and putting stones and logs on the road. As RUTBAT officers rushed to the Stadium gate, local people agitatedly shouted that Belgians had killed their President and warned that if Bangladesh Battalion allowed the Belgians to enter the Stadium they would open fire on the Bangladesh Battalion.

As the negotiation was on and the Stadium gate was being opened, the mob at once jumped forward and created a human barricade in front of the gate. At about 1425 hours, the mob opened fire in the air. In reply, Belgians also fired their rifles. The mob dispersed and the Belgians started entering the stadium through the gate. There was no casualty or bullet injury on the Belgian side. They were given shelter inside the stadium and offered hospitality. The Duty Officer's log book contains minute to minute records of the whole incident.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is pointed out that the Inquiry Committee did not consult concerned authorities in Bangladesh or take interview of any of the Bangladeshi officers who were deployed in Rwanda under UNAMIR during that time. Had the Inquiry Committee consulted the Bangladesh authorities or taken testimony of the peacekeepers under RUTBAT, it would have attested to the above facts instead of making misleading remarks.

Enclosure I to the letter dated 17 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Annexure B TO
Army Headquarters General Staff Branch
Military Operations Directorate
Letter Number 6302/35/GEN/UNAMIR
Dated 11 December 1995

UNAMIR
COMMANDER SECTOR KIGALI
RWANDA

Colonel BEM Marchal L
Kigali Sector Commander
Kigali Air Port
Kigali
Telephone : Nil

April 1994

Dear Colonel,

As I hand over the responsibility of Kigali Sector, UNAMIR, to the new incumbent, I cherish with utmost pleasure my warm attachment with you and your battalion and the excellent work environment which I enjoyed with you all. I also recall with great pride the excellent contribution your battalion under my command made towards peace keeping despite lack of resources, severe logistic constraints and the unstable security situations in Kigali.

I realise, how difficult it is to command a battalion in East Central African environment for an Asian; But you did it excellently and with my total satisfaction. Under your distinguished leadership the battalion never faltered and hesitated to undertake any task given by my Headquarters whatever difficult and hazardous it was; especially, during the last days of my command in the midst of thick battle in Kigali. Your battalion did a commendable job in giving protection to the unfortunate refugees, evacuating the expatriates and also escorting VIPs and important persons taking enormous risks. It did me good to see your young officers and troops undertaking such risky and hazardous missions with high morale and boldness. In this context, I would especially mention the name of Captain Sayeed Siddiky who risked his life while evacuating Prime Minister Designate of Rwanda from a very critical and hostile situation.

I would also like to mention and appreciate your excellent spirit and gesture of co-operation with other contingents in my Sector drawn from different countries. This reflects the inherent greatness of your nation, Bangladesh.

Finally, on the eve of my departure my heart bleeds to leave you in such a state of uncertainty of war, which I should never accept as a military commander. But I am sure you would realise my position. However, I leave my best wishes for you and all members of your battalion. May God bless you.

Sincerely Yours,

MARCHAL
Col BEM

To:

Colonel A S M Nazrul Islam, psc
Commander BUTBAT
Amahoro Stadium

Enclosure II to the letter dated 17 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Annexure C To
Army Headquarters General Staff Branch
Military Operations Directorate
Letter Number 6302/35/GEN/UNAMIR
Dated 11 December 1995

UNAMIR
COMMANDER SECTOR KIGALI
RWANDA

Dear Colonel NAZRUL

Before to leave the Mission and the country I would like to thank you and your personnal for the fine job you did during the KWB4 period and especially during those terrible last days of war.

You may be proud about the high professionnal level of RWTBAT It has been for me a real privilege to have de opportunity to work with you and your guys.

I wish you and your personnal good luck and happiness for the future

M.R. CORA
Col Retd